



Wayzata High School

Reversing Low Math Performance with an Innovative Approach to Instruction and Measurement

Wayzata Public Schools is a suburban, geographically diverse school district that serves nearly 60,000 residents in all or part of eight communities. The district currently serves 10,400 students from kindergarten to twelfth grade through seven elementary schools, three middle schools, a single high school, and a comprehensive community education program. Strong, long-held supportive relationships with parents, residents, businesses and organizations contribute to a sense of collective pride and ownership in the district.

Unique instructional approach dramatically improves math performance

Wayzata high school offers a rigorous math program in which most students complete a full year of math in a single semester through a block schedule. During the '09-'10 school year, the school introduced an innovative program designed to support its lowest-scoring, ninth grade math students. The program, providing the same ninth grade curriculum, co-taught to smaller groups at a slower pace, remarkably brings most students to grade-level performance or above within a single academic year.

High school mathematics teachers Kristen Addonnizio and Nicole Jockisch, who helped launch the program, along with colleagues Dave Droegemeuller and Mark Ludvigson, have provided instruction that goes beyond academics to address work ethic, accountability, and students working to achieve their personal best. In effect, these teachers have created a culture that allows for calculated risk taking and high levels of student learning.

MAP data drives innovation and validates successes

Having used Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) from NWEA in grades three through eight to measure academic growth for nearly a decade, Wayzata administrators knew the value of measurement in evaluating program effectiveness and providing a true picture of how each student is learning.

The high school piloted MAP math 6+ in tandem with the launch of this special program to measure how individual students were being reached and influenced. Students tested at the start and finish of ninth grade averaged an improvement of seven RIT points — an extraordinary growth measure far beyond the norm. When this accomplishment was duplicated the following academic year by another group of students, educators concluded that the program was making a significant difference.

“We were concerned when launching this program that students might resist spending twice as long studying math,” explains Dr. Jeffery Ridlehoover, Associate Principal, “But we have found quite the opposite: that both students and parents are wildly enthusiastic about both the experience and the results. Today, because parents are hearing how this program is helping students achieve, they react like their student got into Harvard when they are accepted. They want their kids involved.”

Professional Learning Communities make data meaningful and actionable

The math teachers in Wayzata high school collaborate in Professional Learning Communities (PLC)s where they have gained extensive training in understanding MAP data. With the actionable insights that MAP provides, teachers are able to adapt instruction to specific learning needs, place incoming ninth grade students in the most appropriate learning environment, and provide meaningful growth targets for each student. “Families can’t help but be excited when a growth target is three points and a student has grown nine points,” says Associate Principal Ridlehoover. “Growth data from MAP is critical in both influencing and validating the work the school district, teachers and students are doing.”

Shared values + actionable data = significant academic growth

Superintendent Dr. Chace Anderson credits the success of this ninth grade math program for its ripple effect: all Wayzata high school students feeling more capable, teachers having solid proof that they can make a difference, and the entire educational community moving forward with greater confidence and enthusiasm. This phenomenon is explained by Dr. Jill Johnson, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning,, “Our academic results reflect a significant paradigm shift from approaching student learning as: What’s wrong with this child? to What can I do to help meet this child’s needs? When people believe in their ability to intervene and truly influence learning, they can create very powerful results. If they don’t have this belief, they won’t have the same success — even if they’re taking the same steps we did.”

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